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Soviet Diplomat in Iran Defects and Flees to Britain

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LONDON, Oct. 23 — A Soviet diplomat has defected from his post in Iran and fled to Britain, and officials here suggested that they thought he could give Western intelligence agencies extremely valuable information.

The defector, identified as Vladimir Andreyevich Kuzichkin, has been given "permission to stay" in Britain, Government officials here said today.

"This is not an ordinary run-of-the-mill affair," one official said. "He is one of the most significant to come our way in quite a while." American intelli-

gence agents in London are expected to seek permission to interview Mr. Kuzichkin.

Some experts speculated that Mr. Kuzichkin was attached to the Soviet intelligence organization, the K.G.B., and would be able to provide information about its activities in the Middle East.

The officials, who refused to be identified, said the diplomat was being debriefed near London. He fled the embassy in Teheran in June and arrived in Britain a few days ago, the officials said, but they would not say where he had been in the interim or what he had been doing. Mr. Kuzichkin is in his mid-30's and was listed as a Vice Consul in

the Soviet Embassy in Iran.

The Soviet Embassy in London, which declined to comment on the reports, asked for consular access, according to British officials, and the request was reportedly passed to Mr. Kuzichkin. There has been no indication that he has agreed.

The wording used by a Home Office spokesman in announcing that Mr. Kuzichkin has "permission to stay" suggested that he has not yet been granted political asylum, possibly because he has not asked for it. There have been some cases of requests for political asylum being turned down.

Official sources said that Mr. Kuzichkin's main role in the Soviet Embassy in Teheran was contact with the Communist Tudeh Party. Despite the strongly religious nature of the Government of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Tudeh Party operates openly and has wide support in Iran.

With Iran's strategic importance in the Middle East, the United States and other Western governments have been watching the progress of the Tudeh Party closely since the 1979 revolution.

Mr. Kuzichkin's defection could help the West by hurting relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. Relations between the two countries have been improving lately.

Diplomatic sources said that Mr. Kuzichkin was married but that his wife had not defected with him. They do not have children.